

Brookline Preservation Commission
MINUTES OF THE MARCH 8, 2016 MEETING
School Committee Room (5th Floor), Town Hall, 333 Washington Street

Commissioners Present:

David King, Chair
Elton Elperin, Vice Chair
Wendy Ecker
David Jack
James Batchelor
Peter Kleiner

Commissioners Absent:

Kirstin Gamble Bridier
Rosemary Battles Foy
Giti Ganjei Saeidian
Paul Bell

Staff: Marissa Barrett, Meghan Hanrahan Richard, Ashley Clark

Members of the Public: See list

Mr. King began the meeting at 6:30 p.m.

6:30 p.m. **Approval of Minutes**

No minutes were submitted for approval.

6:35 p.m. **Public Comment (for items not on the agenda)**

No public comment.

PUBLIC HEARINGS – LOCAL HISTORIC DISTRICTS

6:40 p.m. **39 Worthington Road** (Cottage Farm LHD) – Application for a Certificate of Appropriateness to construct a 3’6” high iron fence and vehicular gate along Worthington Road, extend a small section of the north elevation porch roof, construct a pergola on the north (rear) elevation, remove brick steps and construct a porch on the west (side) elevation, and remove lattice fence and install a wood screening fence on the west elevation to conceal existing condenser units. (Amanda and Paul Gordon, applicants).

Ms. Barrett presented the case.

Michael Wasser from Gregory Lombardi Design was present to represent the applicants Amanda and Paul Gordon.

Mr. Wasser provided an update on the work that has been done on the house. He reported they have completed a lot of work inside the house and are now focusing on altering the current landscape to better suit the uses of the owner. The plans include renovating the existing fountain and upgrading the lawn area. The area closest to the pergola in the back is currently a bricked court yard. Mr. Wasser described the condition of the brick as heaving, and cited their plans to renovate by adding new paving.

In regards to the plan for the expansion of the deck, Mr. Wasser explained their reasoning to widen the steps. The idea is to bring the steps into an axial relationship between the doors and the kitchen. Currently, there is a window overlooking the steps and a door hanging over them. They have plans to wrap the deck around the house and to the back. Mr. Wasser stated they are here to ask the commission to grant them the opportunity to make these changes.

Mr. King asked the public if there was anyone present in the audience to speak to this case.

No public comment.

Mr. Wasser further described the existing conditions and reasoning behind their design approach. The existing gates have a lot of scroll work. The intention of the proposed design is to keep within the vocabulary that exists with the new fence. The brick will match the existing brick currently on the house as close as possible. The paint has been removed by the builder. The project also includes installing gates at the driveway. Mr. Wasser commented that though the proposed height of the gates is five feet high, they are open to avoid blocking of any view from the public way onto the property.

Mr. Wasser described the rationale for removing the steps and adding a landing to the design. It was informed by evidence there was a door at one time and expressed a desire to return to its original use. The current condition is that the door is no longer there. The intention is to make a landing with a small porch so that it is usable. They would also like to block the AC condensers which can be seen from the landing by removing the existing lattice fencing around the condenser units and installing a solid and contained covering.

Ms. Ecker asked a clarifying question about the French doors facing the brick and whether they were visible from the public view. Mr. Wasser stated the condition will remain where it is. He further explained that there is a window at the top of the stairs.

Mr. Elperin inquired about the work being done in the alley as displayed in the master plan. Mr. Wasser clarified it is part of a larger master plan but the alley is not being worked on as of now.

The commission had a discussion over the gate to be attached in the same place as existing marks.

Mr. King inquired about the decision behind adding a fence in front of the house.

Mr. Wasser explained that the owners wanted to feel some sense of separation between their house and the public. They have plans to plant a garden and would like their children to have some protection.

Mr. Batchelor clarified that the work under review for the current meeting was for: the fence along the gate, work down the drive-way, and pergola in the back as there is limited visibility from Cottage Farm Road.

The applicant's proposal includes new paving and reported to the commission that the existing paving is falling apart. Mr. Elperin asked for details for the elements under discussion.

There was a discussion over scroll work along the gate.

Mr. Elperin's opinion is that this is excellent and part of a wonderful rehabilitation of the landscape. He further explained that the details are where the commission would want to be sure it is done well. Mr. King confirmed with Mr. Wasser that he is familiar with the gate guidelines. There was a concern expressed that the fence, once fully landscaped, will look caged in.

Mr. Batchelor motioned to approve the submittal as proposed, with staff review of the details. Mr. Elperin seconded and the commission:

VOTED unanimously to approve the submittal as proposed with staff review of details.

PUBLIC HEARINGS – DEMOLITION

7:00 p.m. **39 Jordan Road**– Request to lift a stay for a partial demolition of a house (Aaron Mayo and Nicole McClelland, owners).

Ms. Hanrahan Richard presented the case.

Mr. Jonak from Thomas Limited Architects and the owners were present to hear the case.

Mr. Jonak explained their design process. They are interested in extending an area out from the back of the house to accomplish a two car garage, kitchen on the first floor, and an additional bedroom. Mr. Jonak explained after their review of the house, the west elevation (denoted on the plans by a dashed line around a mud room and a bathroom) is not part of the original construction. The applicant would like to remove that section and expose the existing brick behind while adding another matching window. This strategy would also benefit access to the drive way.

Mr. King asked for public comment.

Staff acknowledged a letter of support from the owner of 53 Jordan Road.

Mr. Jonak explained they are proposing wood shiplap because it is more refined than a clapboard siding. They also plan on using a standing seam metal roof as opposed to the faux slate which is presently on the house.

The commission discussed what the material would be for the roof as well as the topography on the property. The existing retaining wall is a cast-in-place concrete wall that is deteriorating. As it is currently in poor condition, there are plans to replace the wall in-kind. Mr. Jonak explained the importance of replacing this wall for fear it will fall over.

Mr. Batchelor explained to the applicant that he would like to get a sense for where elements of the house are visible to the public eye. Mr. Batchelor asked staff to display the aerial view on the projection. There was a discussion regarding the house on the right and what one can see from either side. The visibility impact for this project is affected more by the right side because it faces an open space. There was speculation that the eye might not be able to see it around the corner since it is recessed.

The commission discussed the elevations and elements that are unusual in the project. They felt the additions are not as compatible as they might be, citing the multiple roof forms are more articulated and busier than the very simple form of the house. The difference is definitely noticeable.

Mr. Kleiner agreed with Mr. Batchelor and expressed a similar concern over the preservation of the house.

The commission discussed the visible elevation in greater depth. The most visible side is from the east elevation. Mr. Jonak discussed if the form steps out as well, it lessens a very vertical tall massing.

Ms. Ecker commented on the number of windows. Mr. Jonak explained that adding more windows is a main goal of the project and contended that though the windows are beautifully composed, the house is dark. There was further emphasis that the client would like more glass to bring in more light which is an important design goal for the house.

Mr. Jack asked about the awning windows. The client stated there would be no difference between fixed windows and the awning windows. The commission discussed the windows with the applicant. Mr. Elperin shared the same sense that the design is overactive.

The commission discussed the roof and suggested ways to it could better fit the current character of the building. Mr. King appreciated that the applicant wanted to bring a lot of life into the addition. Mr. King suggested making a balcony instead of a roof, citing the resolution of the roof on the east side is uncomfortable. Mr. Kleiner suggested getting rid of the small roof to simplify. There was general discussion over the dormer in the design not reading like a shed dormer because of how close it is to the eaves.

The commission asked applicant to revise the design by simplifying the forms, while stating the basic intent of the design seems correct.

Mr. Jack asked about the gable on the north elevation. Mr. Jonak explained they are pulling the face out a little bit to break up the great vertical dimension of the façade. Mr. Jonak further clarified it would not be visible from anywhere except within their property.

Mr. King asked the client if they would be open to working with a subcommittee to guide the design process.

The client asked if they could work with a subcommittee with an assurance there is a design in what they have presented. Mr. King replied that the design is quite good in many respects but is in need of further review. The client clarified the elements that needed further design review as the dormer and first floor roof.

Mr. King asked if anyone wanted to add any issues to discuss. Mr. Elperin commented there was not an issue with pergola.

The staff reminded the commission they can create an empowered subcommittee to work with the applicant and approve the plan.

Mr. King expressed he was for an empowered subcommittee who can lift the stay if they are happy with the resolution. Mr. Kleiner deferred to the chair's opinion if he should recuse himself from the subcommittee since he is a neighbor. The chair did not see a conflict or need for recusal.

The commission decided the subcommittee will be composed of Ms. Ecker, Mr. Jack and Mr. Kleiner.

The client asked about the height and the commission stated that they are looking at simple modifications. Ms. Ecker clarified the idea behind the subcommittee is to simplify the design to get closer to the existing house. It was stated that subcommittee meetings are public meetings and require a 48-hour notice in advance.

Mr. Kleiner moved to have a subcommittee to design and review further and to empower subcommittee to lift the stay Ms. Ecker seconded and the commission:

VOTED unanimously to move forward with the empowered subcommittee.

7:20 p.m. **172 Buckminster Road** – Request to demolish a garage (Katherine Stewart, owner).

Ms. Hanrahan Richard presented the case.

Ms. Stewart, the applicant, shared that this [initial determination of significance] was unwelcome news for them and further outlined the two things they have been concerned with over the past year: parts of the ceiling are falling on the cars and the floor is starting to buckle. The applicant shared they had a structural engineer out to look at property who advised against using the garage. The engineer's inspection concluded that the beams and plaster are rusted out and argued

that the concrete falling is evidence the structure cannot sustain the load. The applicant shared they are reluctant to park in the garage, stating sometimes they risk it. The applicant stated they are asking for the opportunity to demolish and rebuild a comparable structure. To date, they have not yet contracted an architect and shared they do not have a specific plan for to share with the commission but would like to know if they can go forward in this process.

Mr. King asked if anyone from audience would like to speak to this case.

There was no public comment.

The applicant further described the garage under review as a two story structure that had water radiators, it was fully usable bottom floor while growing up. The applicant's description of the structure, "you walk down Holland road and there's a double door you walk in. I love that building, I just have children, we take care of my mother who is elderly. We can't leave it to rot and have pieces of it continue to fall down. We need to figure out something we can do."

Mr. Elperin stated that the engineer report is pretty convincing and he is inclined to believe it.

Mr. King confirmed that the garage is cinder block and concluded it must be a cast in place concrete floor and there are steel beams in the concrete.

The applicant stated, "we want to rebuild in the exact same footprint, maintain details though maybe take off the piece in the front and put it back on."

Mr. Batchelor confirmed the applicant's interest in keeping the front.

The applicant stated, "Would like a better drainage situation to better preserve the building moving forward. We'd be fine maintaining as it is. Interest in putting an internal stairwell to access the garage from the downstairs. That would not change the exterior but it would change the interior a little bit." The applicant further discussed the incomplete bay which causes parking issues. "Conceptually we are fine with the idea of recreating the look external and look for tweaks on the inside. The bottom floor has a pretty low ceiling height want to make higher- want to keep external exactly the same. "

Mr. King emphasized that the item on the agenda tonight is just determining if the building is significant. Mr. Batchelor cautioned that there are zoning elements to consider through the process but their just determining significance.

The commission and applicant discussed what in-kind means and what the steps are if it is determined to be significant. Mr. Batchelor told the applicant they need sound advice about how to move forward.

The commission discussed with the applicant different strategies they were considering in regards to moving forward. There was discussion over keeping the structure the same but using different materials and how that would impact their plans.

The staff raised a question about maintaining the integrity of the historic material and cited that character defining features are also important. The biggest issue discussed would be any square footage change, which would trigger the need to complete a demolition application. It was again emphasized that with any change in reconstruction, even if the end result looks exactly the same it brings zoning and building into the process.

Mr. Batchelor moved to find the building significant. Mr. Elperin seconded and the commission:

VOTED unanimously to determine the building is significant.

7:40 New Business and Updates

The commission and staff discussed that since May is preservation month it would be well timed to have preservation awards ready. It is a good time to have them again since they have not been done since November of 2014. The staff shared they would like them to become an annual tradition to coincide with the May preservation month.

The staff updated the commission on the work that went into the nomination for Ms. Hardwicke for the 2016 Tsongas award Honoring Women in Preservation and that the application was submitted Friday.

Mr. Elperin updated the commission and staff on the status of the Muddy River Restoration Project. He shared that it is somewhat delayed, but the current schedule it is being planted in July 2016. They have come almost all the way with Phase One. The island that sits in the middle of the water is there. They are still waiting to excavate and remove one of the existing pipes. The Phase One planning restoration is supposed to be an accurate reconstruction of the Olmstead Plan. The problem has been with Phase Two, and so far there does not look to be any hope to get sufficient funds to get restoration for Phase Two. Mr. Elperin shared that there is a budget for dredging and this will help with flood control for a while at least. The funding is still unknown at this time for funding the rest of Phase Two of the project. Further, Mr. Elperin shared that a lot of progress has been made and will report back in the future regarding the footbridge.

Mr. King motions to adjourn the meeting at 7:50pm all in favor.